



The State of the Empire under the Biden Administration

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Taylor Hudak (TH): Hi everyone and welcome back to another episode of The Source, I'm your host Taylor Hudak. Today we will be speaking about the U.S. empire with a guest who is a former insider and has a deep understanding of the U.S. military industrial complex. Our guest is a retired colonel who served in the U.S. Army for more than 30 years, and during his time with the army, he was with the faculty of the U.S. Naval War College from 1987 to 1989. He served as a special assistant to General Colin Powell when he was the chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff from 1989 to 1993. He also served as the deputy director of the U.S. Marine Corps College at Quantico from 93 to 97. And lastly, he served as Deputy Chief of Staff to then Secretary of State Colin Powell from 2002 to 2005. And now he is a Distinguished Professor of Government and Policy at William and Mary College. I'm happy to reintroduce you all to our guest for today, Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson. Colonel, thank you for coming on.

Lawrence Wilkerson (LW): Thank you for having me.

TH: Absolutely. So I do want to get started with the foreign policy of this new administration, Antony Blinken, and he is our new Secretary of State. He just delivered a speech and there were a few phrases in his speech that really stood out to me. and I wanted to get your perspective on that. He said that quote, "Shoring up our democracy - meaning here in the United States - is a foreign policy imperative". He also goes on to say, and I'm paraphrasing here, that people around the world have seen that our democracy is fragile and people are watching to see if we can be resilient and rise to the challenge and that that will be our foundation of legitimacy of years to come.

LW: What do you make of that statement? It's a very important statement. I don't for a moment think that any U.S. administration is going to push hard for what he said. I hope I'm surprised. But it is very important that we make at least some effort in that regard. First of all, because America as the leading empire, if you will, in the world, leads better by its example than it does by its bombs, bullets and bayonets, which it has been trying to do now for over

20 years, very unsuccessfully. So if you can't restore that which other people respect in you, even your enemies, then you're in pretty bad shape.

The second part of it that he said that's implied is we have to get our economy in order. The engine of any empire's success in the world, indeed the engine of any state's success in the world, is principally other than its ideology, it is its economy and its financial network. Long ago. 1947, 1948, 1953, for example, 1956 during the Suez crisis, we could pretty much snap our fingers just with the dollar and intimidate half the world because of the power of that dollar. That has diminished markedly and it is going down even more every day. So restoring the domestic integrity, if you will, of the United States, including its economy, and this means the infrastructure and other aspects of that economy, which will make it resilient and responsive to the future, is essential. Absolutely essential. I think that's why. But some people we wouldn't have expected him to put in the domestic arena rather than the foreign policy arena, because that's the most important arena for Joe Biden, at least for the first couple of years, partly because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which was so miserably handled by the previous administration, but also because of these things that you just quoted the Secretary of State talking about.

TH: Now, during the speech, the Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, did say that the United States was going to be handling things differently than they have in the past. However, that does go contradictory to what we saw just happened recently in Syria with the United States bombing Syria. And the reason for doing this, they're saying, is because of the Iran backed militias which were in the region. And that's who our target was.

Do you think that that is a truthful statement or that there is enough evidence to support that? Or is that more so an excuse to allow for the American public to maybe not be so critical of this recent military strike?

LW: I think it's more of the same, and I'm really sad to see it. I would have rather seen, for example, an immediate and imaginative reach out to Iran without any military connotations whatsoever. No security connotations and say, "What do you need to fight the pandemic?" We know that that thug, Mike Pompeo, acting as the Secretary of State, but nonetheless representing America and to Iran that was America, left you [Iran] in terrible shape from the COVID-19 pandemic. Restricting even masks and other medical paraphernalia from getting to Iran. Restricting vaccines from getting to Iran. If it weren't for China and Russia, there hardly would be anything. So that would have been my move. I would have said here it comes, much the way my President did, George W. Bush in 2002 and 2003, when the really terrible earthquake hit bam, Iran killing thousands of people and making thousands more, some 30,000 to 40,000, as I recall, homeless literally in an hour or two. We sent everything we could. Humanitarian supply. We sent fire trucks. We sent firemen and dogs who knew how to sniff out people in rubble. That's what we should have done. That would have been a smart move and a move that Iran would have appreciated and maybe even might have kicked off talks. **TH:** [00:06:43] And there, of course, has been increasing tensions with Iran,

especially going back to just last year, in January of 2020, when the Trump administration assassinated Iranian General Qasem Soleimani. Do you see the Biden administration perhaps amping up those tensions and conflict with Iran? [00:07:02][19.0]

LW: This is, I think, more of the same from the script that, for example, President Obama mentioned to me when I was in the Roosevelt Room with him and Secretary of State Kerry at the time in November of 2015. There's a president who's 7 through his 2 two terms. And he looks at me and he says there's a bias in this town [Washington] toward war. You think, Mr. President, you think maybe there's a bias towards war? I didn't think I'd ever hear a sitting president in my presence anyway say that. But he said it and he just came out of Libya and he was as much as lecturing Secretary Kerry as he was speaking to me and the general who was there with me. He was telling his Secretary of State, you helped get me into that mess in Libya.

So this is a real problem for Democrats and Republicans. They can't escape this bias towards war. I was hoping that President Biden, with only 4 years, that's all he's going to have. He doesn't need to court the politics necessary to get reelected. He has to sustain himself through the midterms and his party through the midterms. But that gives him a lot of flexibility. But I'm not seeing it. I'm seeing more of the same. I hope I'm wrong. I hope there's going to be something different in the way of foreign policy coming out of this administration. But I'm worried right now.

TH: You mentioned that there is possibly more of the same going on here, so I want to ask you a broader question. Can we vote ourselves out of the military industrial complex?

LW: That's an excellent question, and I don't think so. We can't vote ourselves out of arms all over the place, guns everywhere. 90% of the American people say they want some kind of gun control, a 100% in most polls say they want at least background checks and they want them done well and thoroughly. We can't even get that through. The people want something by a 90% margin and the Congress, because of the NRA and others who fund them, can't do it. They don't have the political courage or the moral courage to do. It is the same way with the military industrial complex. Grab yourself a list of those Congress members, Senate and House, who get money from Lockheed Martin, from Raytheon, from Boeing, General Dynamics, all those different companies. It's too lucrative. And the military contractors overseas are now almost outnumbering the service members overseas and they make lots of money. Minimum salary for these people is around \$ 100,000 a year. And many of them are far in excess of that.

TH: Exactly. And there's no accountability either. I do want to touch on some specifics here with regard to U.S. foreign policy and intervention in Yemen, because there is a serious humanitarian crisis there. Saudi Arabia and its allies have been bombing Yemen for some time now in order to fight the Houthi rebels. The US has been backing this war. Biden said

that he would end U.S. involvement in the war in Yemen. However, Biden says that the United States will still continue to help support defense efforts on behalf of Saudi Arabia.

Is there some misleading terminology being used here?

LW: Incredibly so and I'm used to it, having spent lots of years in the Pentagon. The definition of defensive weapons, for example, and offensive weapons is - you got to count the number of angels that can sit on the head of a pin - with the Pentagon and their lawyers are all equipped to do this. Defensive and offensive have some pretty clear meanings for the average American and the average Yemeni or Saudi or otherwise, that's what we ought to have. We ought to say no more offensive weapons, no more offensive help whatsoever. And if you want that to resume in any way, fashion or form, stop, this war. It has to stop this war. Now, just this morning, I read that we have broken some new ground. The Houthis probably want more than anything else, and certainly Yemenis do, they want the blockade lifted because the Saudi blockade is keeping everything from food, clean water, humanitarian goods from getting in. So they want that lifted. The Saudis are saying they want some kind of buffer zone between them and the Houthis, not just the borders that were in existence. So it looks like we might be approaching a point where Biden's words here, though, they were ambiguous and the shift that is anticipated by Saudi Arabia, and for that matter, Netanyahu also, because they're one and the same now, might be bringing enough pressure to bear where we might have some meaningful talks. But I'll wait and see. This is as you intimated, this is the most incredibly brutal conflict on the face of the earth right now, cholera, famine, bombs, killing civilians, killing children and so forth. This is despicable that the United States, reprehensible that we're involved in it. We should get out immediately. But now where we are and President Biden is where he is and his envoy is where he is, if we really push this and we do bring pressure to bear, we could bring some kind of political close to this conflict. And nothing, nothing on this earth would please me more.

TH: How do you think we can accomplish that?

LW: If you put enough pressure on the Saudis and we know how to put pressure on the Saudis and you tell Netanyahu to shut up and go away or else, and by the way he's going to be working to upgrade his nuclear reactor here [Israel] in a very short future. He's got to shut his mouth about this nuclear business because he's the only one owning nuclear weapons in the region. And I'm sorry, Israel is not a democracy anymore. Israel is an apartheid state, certainly in the West Bank, certainly in the Golan, certainly in Jerusalem and increasingly in Israel proper. So don't talk to me about being a democracy Prime Minister Netanyahu and your own nuclear weapons. I'm as scared of you as I would ever be scared of Iran having nuclear weapons. So let's get this straight and let's work this right. Get him out of the talks, get the UAE in and get the Saudis in and give them the bottom line. You stop this conflict or there'll be bad consequences. We've got that kind of pressure to bear if we want to. And

Biden is not looking for real action. Come on, let's do something here that looks remarkably good for a change.

TH: You know, we do talk about having some change with U.S. foreign policy, and as I asked you earlier, we really can't vote ourselves out of the military industrial complex. And from what I understand, no military operation can be launched, no bomb can be dropped without the involvement of the intelligence community. So how can we change the way we engage with the rest of the world if we are still so strongly controlled by the intelligence community?

LW: I wouldn't I wouldn't put it that way. What you said is accurate, but it's not as accurate as if you had said the Congress. Because the Congress has the constitutional right and power, and even lately modified in the early 70s, the "War Powers Resolution", to tell the president to quit fighting, to stop the military action, to cease and desist. We managed to get legislation passed in both houses, forcing the president to go after Saudi Arabia and the UAE and the rest of the coalition members at the time and stop the war in Yemen in terms of U.S. participation, at least that. It passed and then the president vetoed it. And we didn't have the two thirds of the members to override it. Had the Congress been not politically and morally cowardly, really, and wanted to assert its right over the war power, it would have done two things immediately. One, it would have, in fact, given the number to override the veto and it would have gotten the U.S. out that war. And two, it would have reasserted the constitutional prerogatives of Congress with respect to war power. James Madison, who wrote the Constitution, more than any anybody else if he were alive today we'd call it the pen on the Constitution, said the truest nurse of aggrandizement by the executive is war. And we've seen that. We've seen that since Korea, actually, when Harry Truman went to war on the peninsula without any approval of Congress and it was almost two weeks before, Dean Acheson, the Secretary of State, talked to him and told him to go to the Congress and he was from the Senate, go figure that. So we had not used congressional power over war the way we should in a long, long time. But we've really made it terrible since the AUMF - "Authorization for the Use of Military Force" - was issued for really the first Gulf War and then post 9/11. We're just using those authorities to bomb anywhere. Actually, what President Obama [actually meant President Biden] did the other day, dropping bombs on Syria was illegal by international law. By domestic law, it was illegal.

TH: Exactly, I was just thinking of that as you were mentioning Congress, because technically Congress did not approve for this airstrike. So it was not only illegal domestically, but internationally as well.

LW: Yeah, they take that AUMF, 20 years old now and say, oh, it's under that. Well, sorry, that doesn't work. In international law, we would lose if we were dragged before the International Criminal Court, we would lose.

TH: I do also want to touch on Saudi Arabia and specifically the recently released classified document now declassified, of course, it was a report on the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. The report shows that the Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman, approved the capture of Khashoggi and possibly his death as well. What is your assessment on this report?

LW: Well, I think the report is absolutely correct. I was involved with the special rapporteur for the U.N. in investigating, and she briefed a number of us, Tim Kaine, Senator from Virginia, Bob Menendez, Democrat, of course, in the Senate. And I was convinced long ago that it was not just that MBS (Mohammad Bin Salman) was, shall we say, complicit. He ordered it. He ordered it and monitored it through his right hand man. So I'm not shocked by this. I am shocked by the fact that we seem to be readily overlooking it and not really all that concerned about it. Stalin once said, you kill one person, it's murder, you kill a million, it's just a statistic. Well, OK, fine. But you can reverse that, too, and say this was an American citizen. This was a journalist. This was a man who was, okay, the intelligence services tell us probably he [Khashoggi] was doing some things that were inimical to the Saudi king's interest, the royal family's interest. So what? You don't do what they did to him and you certainly don't do it in such a club footed [fashion]. Only the United States does things as incompetently as he did this one and not covering his tracks at all. I mean, even Putin said something to that effect. This was really stupid. And Putin knows. Putin knows how to do it. He gives you a nuclear pill through a letter to London or something. This was just so in your face. So I can do anything. Which reminds me of a young man who has, you know, the greatest disparity of wealth of any state in the world. 90% plus of the wealth is in the hands of the royals and the rest of the Saudis choke.

TH: Right. Do you think that Saudi Arabia and the crown prince will ever be held accountable for this? And do you think this will have any impact on Saudi-US relations?

LW: I think the only people that will hold MBS accountable will be the royals themselves. If they get sick and tired of him and move him out. Right now that was a possibility. It was a latent possibility for about the last seven or eight months. And the murder of Khashoggi pretty much accelerated. But now I'm hearing that they can't find anybody. That there's no one else who wants anything to do with taking over from this ancient soon to pass away king. That's hard for me to believe, but that's what I'm hearing. So that means that they're stuck with MBS. They've also got a lot of irons in the fire right now trying to protect Saudi Arabia's future. No one knows better than the Saudis. I've had these conversations with Saudi oil ministers and deputy oil ministers. They know it's going away. They know they're going to have trillions of dollars of stranded assets, meaning petroleum in the ground under the desert that they cannot sell to anybody. They know that fossil fuels are going away. It's just a matter of time. And so they're incentivized to spend as much effort as they can to get it out of the ground right now and sell it. There's a little bit of a problem right now because they're trying to hold back in order to punish us and to raise the price of gas at the pump. But those are minor struggles. The big one is in 30 years, everybody is going to be off fossil fuels or we're toast. We can forget it. So this is something that's looming in their minds right in there in

front of their eyes. MBS is promised and has put together a plan to get them out of this problem. To move the Saudi economy down the road, if you will, and to diversify it. I don't know if he can do that, but their hope is that he can. And so I think they're going to ride him. They're not going to change horses right now. It's sad in some respects because I don't think he's the right horse for them, but they don't have much of a choice.

TH: OK, very interesting. Why don't we take a short pause and when we return, we will continue with our discussion on U.S. foreign policy as it relates to China and Russia. But before that, check out this commercial.

COMMERCIAL BREAK

TH: Welcome back to The Source and thanks for sticking with us.

OK, Colonel, I do want to talk to you about China and Russia and its relations with the United States and specifically the potential for nuclear war, something that is absolutely terrifying and it seems ridiculous that we're even having to discuss this. But just last month, Admiral Charles Richard, who is the head of the U.S. Strategic Command, which is a part of the U.S. Department of Defense, stated that there is a real possibility that the U.S. could be headed toward nuclear war and that Beijing and Moscow aggressively challenge international norms. He even states that the U.S. must realize that, quote, "nuclear employment is a very real possibility".

Do you think it's a real possibility? And how dangerous is the sentiment?

LW: First, if I were the President of the United States, no hope there, but if I were, I'd call that admiral in and I'd tell him he has one more choice, one more chance, say anything like that again. And he's gone. He's fired. He's out of there. Not just because it's impolitic to say those kinds of things, but also because that takes us back to the time immediately after World War 2, but certainly 1951 after we had digested the Soviet nuclear weapon test. And people were talking about these things as cap guns, but bigger cap guns, that is to say, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, people like me, we're talking about them as having utility on the battlefield, just a bigger bang. We did a lot of soul searching and analytical thinking, if you will, critical thinking about them over the next 15 or 20 years. Most people in this community, whether they were physicists, nuclear or otherwise, engineers or whatever, came to the conclusion, as did Mikhail Gorbachev, as did almost every leader of the Soviet Union eventually, and every U.S. leader from Carter on that it would be utter disaster to even have a few of the thermonuclear weapons that we have today ignited on the planet.

And later, as we developed even more sophisticated weapons, I'm talking about weapons that have a thousand times the explosive capacity of the bombs we dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I'm talking about unfathomable destruction. We came to the conclusion that we would, at a minimum, bring about nuclear winter. That is to say, we'd have five to 10 years of no crops, nothing you could do in the way of agriculture except in a special place that you had created to do it. It would just negate half of the ability, if not more, of the planet to produce food for people. So you'd be looking at hundreds of thousands, millions, perhaps billions dying just from that, just from the fact we had cloud cover so thick from Moscow to Beijing to Washington to Tokyo that you couldn't do anything. Nuclear winter. But the destruction, too, would be awesome. And now to have us coming out of that critical thought for all those years and suddenly talking again, the Russians have put it in their published doctrine now that if NATO were to attack Russia or any of its allies, they would use nuclear weapons to blunt that attack. And allegedly, because they feel like our advantage and precision guided munitions is so great, they couldn't overcome it except with nukes. So they've developed a short range, fairly powerful nuclear weapon. This is why they violated the INF treaty and why we eventually, very stupidly, in my view, we should have talked about it, vacated that treaty ourselves. The only treaty left now is "New START". And thank God Putin and Biden immediately talked about it and extended it for I think it's five years is the window. Meanwhile, they should get together and start talking and we've got to bring other people into this. And eventually we have to bring in countries like North Korea, countries like Israel. Fess up. You do have nuclear weapons. Now get in the nonproliferation treaty and let's do things the way you should. Pakistan, India, China. We have to bring all these nations into nuclear arms control regimes. You know, climate change is existential, but nuclear weapons are existential in your face. And it just makes no sense for any military officer to be talking about the futility of using nuclear weapons.

Now, I know why they do it. At least I think it could be insane. I mean, I don't discount that entirely, but they do it because they think, oh, that'll scare Putin. Oh, that'll scare Xi Jinping. Oh, OK. It'll scare them all. Oh we'll scare Pakistan and India because in 2019 they came very close to another nuclear exchange between them. They actually lit off their missiles in terms of surveillance and targeting and intel. They were ready to fire them, India and Pakistan worry me every year they do something like that. So this is rhetoric they think I am to keep people who have nuclear weapons from using them. I think it's the opposite. I think you need to shut up and you need to get into the negotiations, into the diplomacy and back into the arms control which we had going so well towards the end of the Cold War. I mean, we had no better partner in that than the Russians. Look what we did. I was there. We went to Russia and we destroyed and disassembled their warheads. We helped them. We did it. We went from 30,000 roughly on both sides under the Moscow treaty in 2002, which Colin Powell had a big hand in. We were going to go down to about 1200 and we did get down to about 2000. That's a hell of a reduction from 30,000 down to 2000. And we were going to go further. We did an analysis on the joint staff that said both of us could do our job of deterrence, which is all anybody wanted to do because they're not going away. You cannot

uninvent them. You can't disinvent them as one Israeli said. So you gotta have it with you. OK, you have a few for deterrence. We proved analytically you could have 300 on both sides and do the same job and look at how much money you'd save. Oh, you'd save a trillion or two trillion dollars that you're going to spend on nuclear weapons otherwise. You could get rid of the ICBMs. They're a target. That's all they are, they're fixed, they can't move, so they're a target. They invite a first strike to nullify them right off the bat, a first strike, a surprise strike, and get rid of the ICBMs. Keep your submarines and keep a few bombs and get down to somewhere between 300 and 600 and get your arms control back. That's where we should be headed. I hope President Biden knows that.

TH: Now, if we want to de-escalate tensions in the Middle East, why doesn't the United States just remove its occupation and military presence in the region and specifically in Iraq?

LW: Why not? I agree with you. Let's get out. That's what Trump said he was going to do. You know, in 2016, I almost cast a vote for Trump because of that, because he said he was against stupid endless wars and he said he was going to get out of the Middle East and specifically out of Iraq. Look what happened. Even a recalcitrant, stubborn, brainless dude like him. But stumbling on something that was smart could not get the bureaucracy to move. He said he was going to get troops out of Syria. You know, we built bases in Syria now. We have bases in Syria. Do you know we're building bases in Norway. We have 800 plus bases in the world and we're building more. Not not cutting them down. We're building more. It's insane.

TH: It is and I mentioned earlier, Jamal Khashoggi, a journalist, of course, who was a threat to the establishment. Another journalist who has also been a threat to the establishment is WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange. It's a case that I've covered very closely. Julian Assange through WikiLeaks exposed U.S. war crimes in Iraq and in Afghanistan.

What is your perspective on his case and his continued torture and incarceration?

LW: Just like anyone who exposes the dirty underwear of the empire, they're going to be pursued and because Julian Assange and also several others I called them, some of them are journalists, some of them are whistleblowers like Tom Drake, for example, or Bill Binney. You get this situation where the empire and its leadership simply can't tolerate them. So it does things like throw the Espionage Act at them. 90 plus years in prison on 20 counts, you know, times 40. This is insane. It's insane. And people forget he's a journalist. Ultimately, he's a journalist. So whatever you do to him is a precedent for what you can do to journalists in the future. That's the most dangerous thing about going after Julian Assange the way we are. I hope the British have enough sense ultimately to defy this special relationship, enough sense. Enough ultimately to not let us have him, period. I don't know where he goes then he's in some kind of legal limbo. But I'd rather see that happen than having him surrendered to the United States knowing full well what we're going to do.

TH: What in your perspective, would the United States do if he were to be extradited?

LW: I think we've said. I think the attorney general is the previous one and if you listen to people like Eric Holder, who is, of course, Obama's Attorney General and bloody minded as hell, if you go back and look at what he did, he prosecuted more whistleblowers than anybody in history. They're going to throw the book at him. It'll be the Espionage Act and he'll probably be convicted. It'll be a kangaroo court and then he will disappear from Leavenworth or someplace and no one will ever know what happened to him. No one will care. His name will expire from history. Except for people like you and me who might shout about it every now and then.

TH: Exactly. We need that. And the only way we can really have a better world or maybe not the only way, but one of the ways is for people to have access to truthful information and for wrongdoing to be brought to light and for it to be made public so this does not continually happen. So there's some accountability. So how can we continue on like this if we are punishing and torturing and incarcerating journalists who expose the U.S. military industrial complex? And how do we get out of this?

LW: That's a good question and I don't have an answer for it. Without some courage from the legislature and some courage from the courts, you take the one that is really associated with the national security complex routinely, the FISA court, and you look at their decisions and they've probably had two, maybe three decisions in the last 20 years that were against the government. And that's partly because they don't know what they're doing. They have no security expertise. They take the government's word for it and they rule on it. And one of the developments that I find particularly foreboding in the last 20 years, but certainly in the last decade, is that the court system, which used to not fool with national security issues, it left it up to the Congress and the president not feeling they had the right expertise and the right purview, is increasingly interfering in those decisions and reinforcing the tendency of the executive and the legislative branch to do draconian things that were violative of our rights, violative of the Constitution, particularly the ten amendments that we put on it to at the end of the day, that are more important than the actual constitution. That's scary. And national security letters and what, for example, what Obama's Justice Department did was reinforced and ratified by the court system. This is bad. This is bad. It should be the other way around. They should be protecting our civil rights, not helping the government to impinge on them. I think it was Franklin who said those who lost after security at the expense of their liberty shall have neither. And he was absolutely right.

TH: Excellent quote. I'm so glad that you mention that, because I feel that oftentimes, too, we put national security above our own liberties and our own freedoms. And it's often used perhaps as an excuse to roll out draconian legislation. And another thing I do want to ask you about is the people who are behind the military industrial complex in the United States, is this really about protecting American citizens or is this about asserting power around the world?

LW: Both. I have a lot of friends who work for Lockheed, Northrop Grumman, Boeing, you name it, Raytheon. And you know they are former lieutenant colonels and colonels in the military, and they have an interest in their own family's integrity and their salary and stock options. And these sorts of things. Every American probably is in some way that way. They don't think about what they're doing in an aggregate sense. When they do, they drink a lot. When they do, they send me emails and tell me, for example, as one did from Lockheed recently, a former Marine - marines are always Marines they are never former - and he said, I'm leaving. And I said, why? And he was just getting ready to be promoted to a fairly key vice president. He said, I'm leaving one because my family's OK now. I've got my grandkids through school and everything, but I'm sick of this. And he said it in a way that it really resonated with me. He said, I'm sick of being a member of the greatest death merchant on Earth.

And he is right. Lockheed Martin is. It is the greatest purveyor of arms and death by those arms on earth. And stealing from the government. Now, look at the F-35 program. It's had so much trouble right now. They have probably stolen from the United States government close to a trillion dollars. DOD [Department of Defense] cannot even audit the program. They were mandated to do so last year. They just reported they can't and they failed. They can't do it. One reason they don't want to do it and they can't do it is because they do not want to show the extraordinary amount of American taxpayer dollars that have been lost. Those taxpayer dollars, though, in addition to going to those vice presidents and CEOs and COOs, go to the Congress. To make sure that the [military] complex stays strong and intact. Now, congressmen don't even work the laws themselves. They don't write the laws. Their staff don't write the laws. Lockheed writes the law, hands it to the staff. The staff looks at it, sometimes, makes a few word changes and then passes it on to the member [of Congress] who puts it forward. And this is true of a lot of other things too - the healthcare industry, the big food industry, fossil fuel industry. Congressmen, less and less write laws. The people who lobby them write the laws.

This is dangerous. It's dangerous for anybody that pretends to be Democratic or Republican, have some sort of legal system that works. But that's what money does. It pollutes. The worst thing that ever happened to us in that regard was "Citizens United". We must reverse that decision. We must get this polluting, corrupting money out of politics. It allows these people behind the scenes with no notice to just pollute. Look at the cost of a senatorial race in just a state now. Let alone the cost of the presidential race. It's in the billions, the multiple billions, six, seven billion to get elected as a senator in a state like Kentucky. It's insanity. But Citizens United and that Supreme Court, that decision will be like Dred Scott. That decision was terrible. It's ruining our politics, it's ruining our legislature and so forth, just as much as the [military] complex is because it enabled the complex to funnel all manner of money in there as it did fossil fuel, big pharmacy, big food, Monsanto and so forth. This is not the way to run a republic. And I have to say a final comment on that. It's our fault. It's every American's fault for allowing this to happen. We have not attended. We have not watched. We have not

spoken up on the occasion and rose. We've not said what we should say. We've not done what we should do. It's out of control now and it's really questionable whether or not we can get it back under control.

TH: I want to end off on a positive note and ask you, what should people be doing right now to ensure that we live in a more moral society that is not dictated by the military industrial complex and the corrupt intelligence communities?

LW: I get that question a lot, particularly from my students, and I used to say all manner of things that I thought were kosher, you know, don't use plastic bottles for your water and that sort of stuff. Think globally and act locally. All the good buzz words. I've changed my mind now because I've seen what happens. You need to get on the telephone. And if you possibly can go visit your congressman and your senator, particularly the congressman or woman, because generally speaking, they are going to - when you knock on their door and you tell them that you're from their district, they're going to say, "come on right in". That's the way it is. That's the way it works. Go right in and sit down and lecture them until they're sick and tired of you.

I saw this work with a number of single issues. It can work with the bigger issues too. Write letters to your senator, call your senator. Don't take no for an answer. Refuse to stop calling him or her until she talks to you. When Susan Collins sat down and told me that Yemen was a niche issue for her and I look back at her and I said, Senator, a niche issue, the greatest humanitarian disaster since World War 2, a cholera outbreak, unprecedented people starving to death, a Raytheon bomb hitting a bus and killing 41 people, none of whom were combatants. That's a niche issue for you. Well, she changed her mind, but I don't know that she actually changed her mind. I hope she did that. You got to get to these people. You got to make them know that they're guilty. You've got to talk to them. You got to tell them gun control, same way, get in there and beat the NRA at its own game. Talk to these people, get them knowing what you want. I tell you what I saw recently that just blew me away. There were no Republicans of consequence in the climate caucus in the Congress. Even with the work of the citizens climate lobby across the country, they were having trouble getting Republicans in that caucus. Well. Along came a bunch of town hall meetings back in places like Texas, Nebraska and so forth, and back to Washington came these people. Whoa, they joined the climate caucus because one of the issues that they heard about when they got home was the climate and the critical nature of the rain, the winds, the hurricanes and so forth. That's what it takes. It takes Americans getting involved and getting involved with the Congress.

TH: OK, very sound and good advice. Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson. Thank you.

LW: Thank you for having me.

TH: Of course. Thank you.

And again, I want to thank you guys, as always, for watching this show and for supporting acTVism Munich. Make sure that you are subscribed to our YouTube channel and hit the bell, so you're notified each time we upload a new video. And if you like the work that we do and you like this video, please donate to our organization so we can continue with our independent news and analysis.

I'm Taylor Hudak with acTVism Munich. And thank you guys for watching.

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